



ACNP Bulletin

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Ready? Set. Let's Jump into a Hybrid Annual Meeting Experience!

For better or worse, the Pandemic has changed us all. From impacts on healthcare, the economy, and the workforce, it seems no one has been immune for change. For many people change is a scary and uncomfortable thing. For me and the ACNP/PMG team, it is not. Is it more comfortable to manage the status quo and keep things stable, well yes, but do we want to be a College of mediocracy and maintaining the status quo? Heck NO! ACNP is a College of the BEST brain and behavior scientists in the world. You each are the cream of the crop. When things get challenging, you lean in, question the data, and reinvent. We, in the Executive Office, are following your lead and doing the same. As scary as it is to run a fully hybrid meeting with 67% of speakers in person and the other 33% virtual <insert anxious breathing and nervous laughter>, the ACNP staff is ready to jump into the new world of meetings and we hope you are too.

The ACNP Executive Office, ACNP Council and the Annual Meeting Virtual/Hybrid Task Force have been busy at work since January 2021 preparing for the meeting. We have analyzed the data from the successful ACNP Virtual Meeting in 2020 and determined what aspects of the meeting to keep and what needs enhancing for the hybrid meeting - all while watching COVID and trying to do what is best for the College, its members, and the science. When we began planning, we had no idea what our virtual vs. in-person numbers would be for speakers and attendees. The trend started with 81% registering in-person and 19% virtual. Then...the Delta variant struck....and the pendulum shifted. We saw 65% in-person and 35% virtual. Surprisingly, the pendulum has shifted yet again with some of those who had pivoted to virtual attendance shifting back to in-person. As of November 12, 2021, there are 1,201 registered for in-person attendance and 701 registered for virtual attendance (36% virtual attendance). The majority of presenters do plan to be in San Juan with 255 presenters (67%) attending in-person and 127 presenters (33%) attending virtually. Below is the breakdown of scientific sessions (70 total):

- 15 fully in-person scientific sessions (all presenters in San Juan)
- 55 hybrid (both in-person and virtual presenters) sessions
- 587 poster presenters attending in-person
- 237 poster presenters only presenting virtually

Many of you have asked what the virtual and in-person experience will be, so I wanted to explain the plan. All of the scientific sessions will be organized to have a live moderator and a virtual moderator, both of which will be live in the session room in San Juan. The virtual moderator will monitor the virtual platform for Q&A while the live moderator will manage all Q&A in the session room. Each session room will be equipped with webcams for the speaker and the audience so that our virtual attendees will be able to see the speaker who is presenting live and the audience in the room that will ask Q&A. For presenters presenting virtually, they will be shown on the screen in the session room and have the ability to interact with the audience during Q&A. Is this a seamless and ideal set-up? Will it feel like the normal ACNP meeting? No – it will be different in ways that are good and some that are more challenging. As you can imagine, there are a lot of moving parts with the technology behind the scenes. Our staff has been working with our technology company and our audio-visual provider to present the most seamless experience as possible.

Another way the ACNP Annual Meeting will be different is our COVID safety protocols. We take running a safe meeting very seriously and need your help to make sure our [COVID Code of Conduct](#) is followed by all. We have implemented some [new food and beverage changes for 2021](#). These changes are meant to create as safe of an environment while understanding there are varying levels of comfort. We have decided that no food will be allowed in any scientific session, including posters. After attending meetings over the past 6 months, I have learned that when food and beverage (specifically alcoholic beverages) is served masks come off and don't go back on. We want all presenters and attendees to feel safe and thus are removing food service from any session. This will allow for people to choose if they eat with a group or eat alone. Alcoholic beverages will be limited to two drinks per event. While this may be viewed as a cost

cutting measure, it is really to create a safer environment for everyone attending. I ask that you respect the measures we are taking, even if you don't like them, for this year. To me, it is very important to meet in person. The level of interaction between scientists that you see at an in-person meeting is very hard to recreate virtually. I see these as minor sacrifices for being together again.

One other item worth mentioning is our new lanyard coloring system. As we all know, registered attendees will have varying comfort levels with contact. The colored lanyard system will allow attendees to choose a lanyard to communicate with other attendees their comfort level. Red lanyards will indicate that people should keep their distance, yellow lanyards indicate a minimal level of contact and green lanyards signify more comfort with close contact. We hope the colored lanyard system will assist us all in that uncomfortable moment of "should I hug, shake or elbow bump?!"

I cannot be more excited (and a bit nervous) about the upcoming meeting. Seeing so many familiar faces will warm my heart and recharge our staff. The power of in-person meetings cannot be denied. We know the conversations and collaborations that occur at the meeting will grow and further the field and we are excited to play a role!